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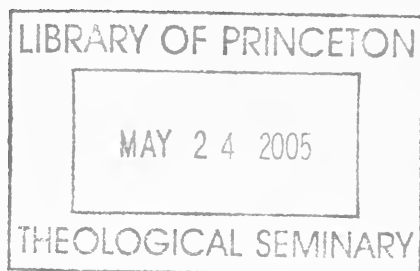
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**THE FORMATION OF AN AMERICAN LITERATURE :**  
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**AN ADDRESS**

**DELIVERED BEFORE**

**THE ALUMNI ASSOCIATION**

**OF**

**LA FAYETTE COLLEGE,**

**SEPTEMBER 20, 1843.**

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**BY REV. J. W. WOOD, A. M.**  
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**[PUBLISHED BY THE ASSOCIATION.]**

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## A D D R E S S .

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To the ALUMNI of La Fayette, we present our salutations of friendship and peace. Another anniversary has convened us, to renew our affections, to welcome another class to our number, and to talk of by-gone days. What greetings! What inquiries! What congratulations! What recollections! What colloquies! What joys we have! The Franklins, my brothers—the Washingtons, our honorable compeers;—once, we wore our respective badges, in generous and worthy pride, nor are they forgotten, but now we possess the more ennobling badge, conferred by our *Alma Mater*. “*Sons all of a noble parentage,*” said our respected Ex-President, who never speaks vain flattery, and why then, on this our birth day, may we not rejoice and be glad? The occasion demands it. Whose bosom does not dwell with ineffable emotions, when, after years of absence, he revisits the scenes of his childhood, and recognises the house where his infancy was cradled—the trees which he planted, the fields where he roamed, and the friends whom he loved? So it would indeed be passing strange, if four years residence at College, than which no period of life is more eventful, should not find objects and associations, the recognition of which always awakens the liveliest feelings.

The infancy of the literary life of some of us, was cradled on the bank of the mirrored Lehigh, before yon noble pile was reared, to crown the beauties of this borough. And can becoming modesty forbid us to

say more? We saw the deep foundations of that edifice laid, with the Word of God—the Protestant Bible, in its corner stone. With our own hands we wrought in its construction, and completion. Then we had a variety of life, and in the progress of its pleasantries we cleared the Campus in the rear—graded the promenades in front, and erected *the steps*, by which to climb, more readily, the hill where Fame's proud Temple stands. And, in procuring libraries for our respective societies, *there* was a noble race, to which we buckled tight, and thought it glorious to win or lose. But still more worthy have been the efforts of later classes, in enlarging those Libraries, collecting Cabinets, and furnishing the Halls, with such taste and elegance, as are not surpassed at Old Nassau or Venerable Yale. And can we forget the stirring scenes within those Halls, when mind grappled with mind, in strong debate—or, in the more didactic essay? When the aspiring Freshman gave intellectual battle to the Sophomore, or, both united to confound the Rhetoric and Logic of the sagacious Junior—or, all combined to find by the balances of criticism, the specific gravity of the learned Seigneur? No: those were scenes of deep impression, and times of delightful fellowship. Nor do we forget that BRAINARD is our adopted name, and that, laying other names aside, we met to cultivate his spirit, and to evince a like devotion to the interests of the Redeemer's kingdom. The high and heavenly bearing of that association, evangelical in spirit,—approved by the good, and encouraged by many a rich tribute from Easton's Christian muse, will be best known by the fruits of holiness which its members may bear.

We may not then, without reflecting on our gratitude, and good name, omit, at our annual festivities, to per-

petuate the memory of these incidents in our chequered life. *Here* in an important sense, our characters were moulded—*here* our minds were trained, to weld the iron links of reason—*here* we obtained the key of knowledge—*here* we received the tuition of the learned—the example of the worthy—the kindness of friends—the patronage of a generous people, and some of us, (may I say it, “*inter nos,*”) *Heaven’s last best gift to man!*

Though it is not long, since we bid adieu to College scenes and duties, to engage, personally, in the responsible offices of real life, yet sufficient time has elapsed, at least with some, to develope, in a great degree, the value of our education and principles, in their application to the interests of society. Very soon our influence is decided, for neutrality, in politics or religion, is not indigenous to the American mind. Honor, wealth, good, and evil, like commanding officers, require every man, in the rank and file of his own listing, to right about, and face something as an enemy. Who are you? is a question, an unequivocal reply to which, must be always at hand, and hence Conservatism, as politically explained, is a lean hobby, for a third party, because the other two, equally profess in principle to adopt it. Unfortunately however, for every interest under popular control, the *decision* of a mind is more admired, than its *qualities*. We hence hear of the *prominent* candidate, whose goodness or viciousness is not considered, but only that, “from his shoulders and upwards he is higher than any of the people.” Still it remains as true in practice, as in theory, that there is more sanity and wisdom in going slowly right, than swiftly wrong, and while the warm spirit of our times, would ripen character quick, especially that of educated young men, and

carry it to market, *via rail-road*, it behooves them to remember the wisdom of the Latin proverb, "*Festina lente*," hasten slowly. As far as the world has been governed at all by human agency, it has been governed by educated mind, and whenever the Vox Populi is the governing power, the people must be educated. Yet among our own people, whose theory of government requires the reverse, there are more learned demagogues than school teachers. In general, every man may be a leader of the people, in proportion as his mind is educated, or drawn out, more than their's. Therefore the great questions, now before the people of this country, and which involve their weal or wo, are to be decided by the arguments, instructions, and influences that go out from educated mind. From this fact, may be inferred, with propriety, the solemn responsibilities of those whose advantages, have brought them to be Bachelors or Masters of Science.

What then, are the subjects now in hand, the exposition and settlement of which, are devolved on educated minds? They are many, and full of interest. An attempt to enumerate them, would be improper on an occasion like this. The audience of the wise and good suggests to us the lesson of modesty. We may however, mention *one* of the responsible duties, resting on educated men, in this country, and in doing so, shall announce the subject of this address, viz :

#### THE FORMATION OF AN AMERICAN LITERATURE.

The Literature of any people, is the product of their minds, recorded and perpetuated in language. The *things* in which men are interested, will always be the subjects of their thoughts. The discussion—exposition,

and settlement, of these subjects, recorded in books, make up a literature. To make, and perpetuate books, then, is to make a literature. It is a happy circumstance that, but few, comparatively, of the people make books, and that the perpetuity of those that are made, depends, not so much on the printers' durable type, as on the suitableness of the work to the wants of community. Since the invention of printing, we have adopted that mode, to the exclusion of others, for the ancient Druidical art, of perpetuating sentiments by song. Singing is not so available to us, judging from the fact, that our historic songs, so lately sung by the nation, have died away in the distance of a year or two ; but while book-making will continue, and perhaps increase, Literature is not a thing that is ever forming, and yet never completed. The men who wrote for the English, in the seventeenth century, gave that people a literature, which has been the basis, and pattern of *Belles Lettres*, among them ever since, and probably will continue to be, for a century to come. It is however, in form and odor, purely British,—the product of the minds of men, who, understanding the foundations on which their peculiar systems of religion and politics rested, elaborated and finished the best literature the world has ever seen—yet adapted, chiefly to themselves, their circumstances, habits, and preferences. The literature of France and Germany, is also wrought out : the former of vanity and Atheism, and the latter, of a smoky skepticism. When the true conceptions of a people's language, customs, politics, and religion, are concentrated and presented in books, so as to warm the public mind, it receives an impression, like the fused metal of which the stereotype plate is made. The style and sentiments of such books, become the dies, after which others are cast, and as a whole, constitute a written literature for the people.

The *themes* on which we may write for ourselves a name, by forming an American Literature, are to be found among ourselves. They are many, fruitful, and inspiring. The philosophy of our government is yet to be written, that the world may read, and understand it. Our institutions, are yet an anomaly, and a puzzle, to the Orientals—depending on a patronage wholly voluntary, and subject to the frown or favor of the populace, yet permanent, prosperous, and useful. The relations of the Church and the State, each independent of the other, yet mutually and virtually interested in each other's administrations, is a mighty subject, for a mighty mind. The union of Church and State, has been reciprocally charged upon the policy of all parties, and is so magnified by public estimation, as to appear the greatest of evils,—nor can it be denied, that the results of such a union, in other countries, warrants great jealousy of whatever looks like it. But we apprehend, that the wisdom, and power of the strongest intellects, and the best hearts, will yet be required for the safe, and satisfactory adjustment of the *collision*, already commenced between the Church and the State. The political, as well as religious necessity, of a spiritual Christianity, as opposed to that of form and ceremony, has yet to be exhibited, and applied, to the understanding and conscience of our own people, and taught to the world, as the only true basis of successful government. Our history is a splendid theme—surpassing that of other nations, in its character, and relations. It is already begun, by our own gifted BANCROFT, of whom we may well be proud, and whose books should grace the library of every student, who would read the golden pages of his country's fame. Not to mention others, here are themes, the exposition and application of

which, must lay at the foundation of a literature peculiarly our own, and on which, the educated mind of the nation must exert its energies, in patient study—purity of purpose, and with philosophical discrimination.

The formation of an American Literature, depends much *on the force of circumstances*, involving our vital interests. It will not be the demonstration of a theorem merely, but the settlement of matters of fact. Hitherto, radicalism and infidelity, have not disturbed the equilibrium, in our systems of jurisprudence, and national faith, so as to call forth the energies of the men, who are to understand, and write down, the characteristics of the Anglo Saxon, after he is puritanised, in such a way, as to stereotype their style and thoughts, upon the public mind. It was not until England was threatened with skepticism, atheism, anarchy and misrule, that the great men, who saved her from a like fate with unhappy France, approved before the nation, and the world, with profoundness of learning—with arguments, practicable, and irresistible—with an elegant and perspicuous style, and with that benevolent yet indomitable purpose of soul, which usually accompanies a consciousness of rectitude. The laxness of good principles, and the disorders, in public affairs, which obtained, from the days of the Bloody Mary to the commonwealth—the tyranny and bloodiness of their kings and nobles—with the mighty endeavor to repudiate the christian religion, were among the circumstances, which aroused the best intellects and hearts on the Island, and surrounded the throne of Charles and Anne, with such a galaxy of illuminated mind, as makes the 17th century the golden era, in English annals. The men of that era, who in saving

England, blessed the world, thought and wrote, for some definite and valuable end, with great intensity and integrity. They rightly felt, that every sentiment and sentence, would be subjected to the *review* of the learned—the eagle-eyed—the cavelling, and the profane. They therefore wrote on history—romance—jurisprudence—metaphysics—ethics, and religion, so that what they wrote, would remain written. Hence the Analogy of Butler—the Principia of Newton—the Essays of Locke—the History of Goldsmith—the Tracts of Hannah Moore, and the Rasselas of Johnson, are durable *monuments* of mind, built of thoughts and words, with great skill in execution, and give to English literature its identity, quality, and glory. The adage is true, in a qualified sense, that “circumstances make the man,” and is equally applicable to the formation of a literature. Such circumstances are not wanting to call forth and try the value of educated minds in this country. Already, we have standard works before the world, in a true American costume. We need not blush to mention some, who hold a high station in the Republic of Letters,—Webster in lexicography—Kent in jurisprudence—Bancroft in history—Edwards in metaphysics,—in description, poetry, or well-wrought and profitable fiction, Irving, Stephens, the Abbotts, the Misses Beecher, Mrs. Sigourney, and others, have already laid the foundation of a literature, pure, healthful, and American.

Occasions demanding similar, and continued effort, are now before us. We may mention *the influence of the periodical press*. This is a *fountain* whence streams flow through all the nation, from which the people drink. Ours are a reading people, and the supply of



healthful reading matter, now demanded by millions of minds, open to impression and instruction, challenges the attention of every man qualified to bless his generation. But a large portion of the daily and periodical press, exerts a widely *pernicious* influence on the politics, the respect for law, and the religion of our people. The province of the periodical press is, to supply accommodations for the public mind, in its migratory state, rather than to lay up a good store, for a permanent settlement; and it were better for that mind, to continue its journeys, than be content with much of the fare that is set before it. We live in an age of magazines—of essays—of reviews—of journals—of *Libelli*, little books—of machines to make learning easy—of the child's first book of knowledge simplified, so that the infant may as well take lessons from the *Principia*, as the *Primer*, and but a few of these are put out, except for a reason found in a good subscription. Our caterers seek to *gratify* the public taste, rather than to elevate and purify it, and in a great portion of the mass, the multitude, and the variety, with which they cause the mails to groan, there is not that, which answers to the truth, the justice, and christianity which are elements in our social economy,—so that we can say and feel, that our literature is completed and adopted. We do, by no means, pass an indiscriminating censure upon the periodical press,—knowing gladly, that wise and good men are employing it successfully, to disseminate correct principles, and to counteract destructive influences, from whatever quarter they may come. We have already, *volumes* of American periodicals and quarterlies, which will live to bless a thousand generations. And why should not all be such? The Press, that Archimedean lever and fulcrum, by which the world is moved,

must be redeemed from *all* unhallowed and destructive service, and plied alone, for the good of man and the glory of his creator. *Hic opus est*, here is labor—and, Gentlemen, we cannot be long in public life, without meeting opportunities of contributing to the blessed, or pestilent potency of this great engine.

Another circumstance, of commanding importance in developing American mind, is the relation of the Church and the State. Their independency, in the enactment and execution of their respective laws, has already proved to us the danger of an unhappy collision. This conflict, of which we speak, may be resolved into the inquiry, *whether the Church has a right to make and execute laws which contravene the laws of the State?* The facts that have brought this grave question before the American mind, are, the expulsion of the Bible from common schools, and the unqualified condemnation and excision, by some portions of the Church, of men who held slaves. We mention not these specific cases, for present discussion, but to illustrate the principles involved in a collision of the Church and State. Our situation seems like that of a house divided against itself. Here, the philosophy, efficiency, and security of our government will be discussed, and demonstrated. The wisdom, learning, and judgment, which will be called into requisition, to promote a reconciliation, must of course operate through the Press, and will constitute no small contribution to our literature. Neither the Church nor the State will intentionally promote an encounter; yet we cannot calculate on the provocations that may arise, from ignorance, ambition, prejudice, or mistake, in men of both parties. If a number of citizens may associate, in any of our State governments,

under the name of a Church, wielding the power of conscience, by adopting the word of God as their rule of faith and practice; and, in the exercise of their discipline, may condemn a man for an act, which the civil law pronounces innocent and protects him in doing,—then, who can define the limit of Church jurisdiction, when that Church pleases to subvert the law of the State? Or, if the Church may not execute any of her laws, except such as are consistent with the law of the State, then where in fact is the power of the Church, or her independence for discipline, but in the hands of the State, where the people have always been afraid it would be? On the first supposition, every thing is conceded, which established the Inquisition, under the most amiable Isabella of Spain! And, according to the second, the laws of a Church, which guard its doors against the ingress of the profane—or purify the body when infected, may be rendered nugatory, by a law of the State, and thus the sacred ordinances be open to all, without discrimination.

Without pretending to be oracular, on points where doctors disagree, we venture the thought, that it is safer, for the State to possess the excess of power, than the Church. The beauty and strength of the Church, are not in her power to legislate and condemn. She may well afford to yield to the State, an entire sovereignty, in matters fairly within the cognizance of both, and employ her gifts, and graces, in her more appropriate work. The abuse of assumed or entrusted power, has always been her heaviest curse, and the more she has endeavored to extend her triumphs by wordly weapons, the more she has lost of purity and grace. She cannot attempt to interpret, with authority, the law of God to

the State, without assuming the right, to burn a heretic. Rome, with her old iron inquisitorial keys, asks little more, than the authority to judge municipal laws, by *her* interpretation of the Scriptures. The Church may preach her doctrines, and sway the minds of men by her solemn and eternal truths. She may urge holiness, by faith, as the only passport to heaven, and warn the guilty of the wrath to come. She may adorn and fortify herself, with wisdom, grace, and peace. Her members may, like other citizens, petition, remonstrate, speak, or write against whatever they consider wrong in legislative or executive,—but that she is, *jure divino*, not subject “to the powers that be,” in cases within their jurisdiction, is a principle subversive of civil rights, and productive of an ambition, under zeal for God, for money, power, and misrule. “Is the position admissible,” says an anonymous author, “that in our system of government, securing equally civil and religious liberty, the Church can have its spiritual laws, repugnant to the municipal law, and by its judicial proceedings, and sentences, so far as it can make its spiritual power felt, invalidate that law?—requiring its members to forego, or renounce, the benefits thereby secured to them, or, in the alternative, depriving them of their comforts or immunities?” On what plea can the determination be based, to support no public schools, but such as use not the Bible, but that the Church may compel the State into conformity with her opinions? “On the other hand, it is inherent in our policy, as a principle, that the Church, equally with others, individuals or bodies, is subject to the municipal law, and that it can have no rule, nor pursue any proceeding, inconsistent with this law—such rule or proceeding from the nature of the case being void. The Church,

in the proper discharge of its functions, may instruct, enlighten, and persuade, in order to produce a change of laws, by the constituted authorities—but it cannot impair, or infringe the duties, rights, or immunities, which its members owe, or hold, as citizens, under existing laws. For the Church to impugn, by its discipline, the laws enacted, declared, and administered by the constituted authorities, reproaches the Gospel, and disregards propriety.”

Enough has been said, to shew the vital importance of this and similar subjects. We are working out, before the world, the great experiment of republicanism prosperous and permanent. As emergencies arise, corresponding efforts will be made, to develope and illustrate the wisdom and practicability of our theory. The record of these efforts, preserved in a form which makes them the property of other generations, will form a part of that great store of occidental learning, philosophy, and prudence,—an American Literature.

Our literature must be *original*. The American reader wants to feel conscious, that his author is a free-man—the originator, not of the truth imparted, but of its dress, who is not so much attached to another’s “form of sound words,” as to have none of his own, and whose every sentence radiates honesty, truth, and liberty. We do not forget—but rather rejoice, to acknowledge ingenuously, our indebtedness to English genius, erudition, and style, for much that is valuable in the formation and establishment of our literature. But while we thank them, for the privilege of reading their Johnson, Addison, Burke, and others—we need not, only that in order to have a literature of our own, we

must become literary burglars. Our country is not so ill-shaped, that we need to cross the Atlantic for a beautiful or sublime scene. Our people—our institutions—our improvements—and our manners, (begging Mrs. Trollope's pardon,) are as worthy of record as those of Europe. Stephens is showing up our antiquities, as second to none in the world. Our Marshall and Bancroft make brilliant pages, when they write our history. Our Washington and our Presidents are as justly loved as the young mother in St. James Palace—and there is just as much sense in Yankee Doodle, or a good *Hurrah* by the butt-enders of the New York democracy, as there is in the British shout,—“*God save the Queen!*”

Originality, with us, means, among other things, that which is *American*. Our writers must write what is useful at home—pertinent to our wants—suited to the reader as well as the writer—profound, yet not prosy—entertaining, yet not frivolous—impressive, yet not at the expense of morals and religion. Radicals, levellers, and philosophers of the French Encyclopedia School, cannot write out their sentiments successfully, on these shores. The temper of our people, their actual wants, and their love of truth, in its simplicity, are not favorable to the efforts of a genius, ill disposed towards our institutions. The vigilance with which encroachments on our primitive and puritan principles are watched, and the insipidness of a work wanting the *utile*, after which we seek, embarrass every mind, not conscious of rectitude towards us.

In an American literature, we want no useless and injurious fiction. We go, in the main, for fact, not fiction. In *reading*, a Yankee would not be moved by

that, which would make a Frenchman weep or laugh. Happily for us, our own writers have not yet perpetrated much useless fiction, which has been rendered permanently injurious by its celebrity and adoption. What is popularly termed *light reading*, is an exotic, and answers better in countries, where confinement to hard labor, not as convicts, but as freemen, is less reputable; and where society lays in strata, and most of those in the upper non-laboring layers, are employed in devising ways and means to "kill time," in order to live. The greater part of that reading, therefore, which furnishes entertainment for those who love to be idle—excitement and cunning to the vicious, and pleasure to the impure, is imported, and is recommended, and circulated, by those who stoop to pander for the sensuality they affect to despise, to an extent that demands prompt and decided remonstrance, on the part of all good citizens. Against the importation of that which is not valuable for good at home, and of questionable morality, we must protest, in no equivocal terms. Our enemies are not the emigrants who are crowding to our shores, for we can do them good, and make them happy, with ourselves; but they are the *reprints* of corrupting, disorganizing works, whose responsible author is not accountable at the bar of public opinion, because he lives beyond the Atlantic—or, is dead. They are the writings of the Bulwers, Byrons, Scarrons, Fieldings, Smolletts, and the Boccacios of the Italian school, not so attractive, indeed, as the sensual ethics of Hume, or the insidious lies of Gibbon, yet, in their general drift, false to nature, impure and pernicious. Did the Plymouth Fathers, or can their loyal sons, desire that such works should be naturalized, and incorporated into our

national literature ? No ! it would be Anti-American to

Send to other climes for such odors, sauce, or song,  
And robes, and notions, framed in foreign loom.

Their pestilent sophistries, libertine sarcasms, interesting villains, virtuous seducers, affectionate pirates, with all that "*pecus turpe*," foul herd—let them remain at home, and perish there, as soon as is convenient. They cannot be mingled with the genuine product of American mind, without sullyng its purity, and destroying its usefulness. Even the contributions of the funny Boz, are declined, for if we ken aright the current of the floating dust, they are fast going, and let them go, to the land of oblivion—

*Ad locum umbrarum, nocti, somnisque, soporae.*

The number and influence of these reprints, are sufficient to call forth, and employ the most gifted minds, nor may they slumber long, without great peril to themselves and others. Opposed to this overwhelming tide, that is thus setting in upon us, must a barrier be raised by the product of minds, disciplined to vigorous thoughts, and rectified by a sound philanthropy. They must rally in the American Republic of Letters, and elaborate a literature, which shall impress, and govern the minds of our people, and perpetuate the greatness and usefulness of our institutions.

A successful writer, for the American people, must not select his hero from the dark ages, and essay to exemplify through him, the mawkish love-sickness of knight-errantry, cultivated among the ghostly shadows, and the crazy walls, of some forsaken palace. Our



business tastes and habits forbid it. The divine right of kings—the glory of some coroneted house, whose blood runs down through titled scoundrels—apostolical succession, or the pious pilgrimages of barefooted penitents, will never form the subject of a *popular* epic for this country. We cannot sympathise with the spirit of feudal times, nor see the utility of feudal glory, as those do, whose homes are built of its remains, and whose first breath is of its infected air. We have preserved but one relic, worth mentioning, of the leaden-headed philosophy of the feudal age, and that is found in the law of honor. But even this, by being associated with the men and institutions of civilization, is much degenerated—and, like the wild beast in the managerie, has so far lost the beauty of its barbarous nature, as to leave it a perfect nondescript. Common people cannot practice it, without making themselves ridiculous; and yet to be a swindler—of doubtful pedigree, or a fool, forms no objections. Its spirit is neither revengeful, nor affectionate. “To live, or not to live,” equally well fulfils its designs; and since we cannot understand its interpretation, we cannot, in our literature, credit its honor, trust its morality, or embalm its dead.

We must have a literature, Gentlemen, which is not only nominally Christian, but strictly *Evangelical*. We are not a nation of Atheists, nor of Infidels—no, nor are we even a skeptical people. It has been said, indeed, that the tendency of our policy was to irreligion, and confusion—but the living soul of our nation, is evangelical piety. Without that, our theory is a lifeless corpse. Our infancy was cradled, and nurtured, by the prayer of faith, as shown by the records of the Continental Congress, and the life of Washington. Are we ingenu-

ous, or loyal, then, if we affect to loathe the supremacy of the Prince of Peace? Will the name of Jesus, reverently and appropriately used, sully the purity of our Belles Lettres? By no means,—for His word is, in this country, the people's own book. The first in our literature, is the Bible. It was never possessed by any other people, as it is by ours. In other lands it belongs to the King, or the Bishop, or the Pope, or the Priest. It is there subject to the decisions of a counsel—it must be explained by the Church, or is transferred into a liturgy by Parliament. *Here*, every man owns it, or may own it, not by the permission of a prelate, but as the gift of God. He reads it, understands it, and loves it, for himself—and if it lead him to the altar of prayer, he himself officiates in the offering made.

That the spirit and the principles of the Word of God, should pervade the minds of our people, modify their thoughts, and give character to their laws, and literature, is in accordance with our history, and professions. Hence, we require the minds, which produce our books, to be subject to its rules of morality and duty. When Gibbon secretly repudiates the Gospel, in almost every chapter, we despise his cowardice, and reject his book, or read it only, as a historical romance. The speculations of the German neologists, by which the cardinal truths of the Bible are obscured, or perverted, we cannot relish. They are not American. We prefer to drink of the waters of life, as they gush out from the fountain itself; or, if we receive them from the hand of another, they must still be unmingled and pure. The christian religion is the main efficiency of our civilization,—an element in all our economical arrangements. If not the origin of our representative system, its hap-

piest illustration and parallel, are found in the doctrine of justification by faith in a mediator. We, therefore, want to find in all our books, an acknowledgment of the christian religion, not formal and mercenary, but ingenuous and cordial. That book of travels, history, philosophy, poetry, or fiction, is greatly defective, if its author has omitted to recognize, in his chapters, the genius and spirit of evangelical truth, or has used its phrases for sarcasm, or pertinent jest. Neither the philosopher, the jurist, the ruler, or the subject, loses anything, but profits much, by a candid avowal of his delight in the law of the Lord. Is Washington less honored, because he bowed in prayer at Valley Forge? Is it a shame to Jackson, that he professes his faith; or to Harrison, that he read his Bible? We answer as Americans, instinctively—No! The product of American genius and learning, therefore, will be more permanently valued, and honored, by being imbued with the morality, and love of the gospel.

Any intelligent observer of the times, may see, that the conflict concerning religion in this age and country, is not the same that took place in England, between the friends and professed enemies of the gospel. Here, all systems are nominally christian, though some are opposed to, and destructive of, others. The term CHRISTIANITY, is so extended, that it covers any thing professing to be religious, whether it originate with Joseph Smith, Fourier, Miller, or the Pope. The question, then, is not, whether we will continue to be called a christian people—but, it is, whether we will have a christianity of forms and ceremonies; or, a christianity appealing to, and sanctifying the soul. The settlement of this great question, will settle the christian

character of our literature. If we adopt a spiritual christianity, whose province is with the soul—whose results are inward purity, and life, it will be so described and recorded in a thousand different books. But if, on the other hand, we prefer a christianity, whose elements are form, and ceremony—as the saying of stereotyped prayers—the exaltation of “*the church*”—the burning of candles, and of heretics—genuflections, masses, crosses, the worship of dead men’s bones, absolutions, unctions, “the eating of porridge in Lent, or of fish on Friday, spitting to the left when a dog meets you, and wearing sack-cloth like Dr. Pusey,”—then, as in the literature of Italy, these things will be written and perpetuated in ours. This subject cannot be settled by ecclesiastics, or synods, or legislatures, but by the preferences of individuals. It is already propounded to the American people, on one hand, by specious arguments, for the liturgy, penance, the sign of the cross, apostolical succession, the wafer, and holy water—and, on the other hand, by arguments for giving the bible to all the people, for the parity of the clergy, and for a religion whose elements are spiritual. FORMALISM and SPIRITUALISM, are not partizan watch-words, but indices, pointing to great practical subjects, now in hand. The former embraces the politics of all parties, among its means and ends—the latter refers only to an inward regeneration, producing love to God and man.

Already, the powers of light and darkness, are rallying, to influence the decision of the public mind on these subjects. Their reference is not to Congregationalism, or Popery—to Presbyterianism or Prelacy, but to the difference, and the distinction, between the form of Godliness, and the power—between externals and in-

ternals. ONE is a religion of nature, awakening emotions of the beautiful and sublime, as you view its altars, its ritual, its silver chalices, its surplices, its scapularies, and its poetry of mint, anise, and cumin—or, as you walk beneath its Gothic arches, shaded by the sombre light of oriel windows, either in New York, Oxford or Rome, or as you attend its solemn service, under the eye of angels in fresco, and canonized saints, and give yourselves up, to the transporting swells and cadences of the chant. The OTHER, is a religion of faith, and teaches to call no man *master*. Its beauty is invisible, and spiritual, working in man, the image of the invisible God. Its adornment, is its purity and simplicity. It is not a parasite at the feet of presidents, or titled barons, nor a wheedler with politicians. It is of Heaven, and not of the Fathers. The election of one of these two kinds of christianity, as the religion of our country—not to be authorised by statute, but accredited, and adopted by the people—is an occasion of vital importance, to our institutions, and the christian character of our literature. Watson's Apology, Leslie's Short Method, Taylor's Moral Demonstration, and Paley's Evidences, incomparable in their place, do not afford the security we need. Some *American* minds, disciplined and sanctified, must demonstrate to the people, the excellency of a spiritual christianity, and its necessity, to our social and civil systems. If "North America is the asylum and home of Protestantism," then the educated men of this country, have a Herculean work to do, in holding up, the evangelical spirit and principles of the Bible, as the sun of the nation, and in staying the awful transit of Formalism, whose cheerless twilight brings a death-chill over every living thing.

Gentlemen, we must soon again, take the parting hand, and return to our posts of duty and usefulness. May a kind Heaven direct our way! Let us ever remember, the elevated standard of duty, honor, and faith, inculcated at our Alma Mater. For, whatever other educated men may do, the sons of Lafayette should be men of great purity of purpose—sound philanthropists, and intelligent servants of their God and country.









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